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INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS

OPENING STATEMENTS

A. Romans is the most systematic and developed doctrinal book of the Apostle Paul. It was affected by circumstances in Rome, therefore, it is an "occasional" document. Something occurred that caused Paul to write the letter. However it is the most neutral of Paul's writings, in that Paul's way of dealing with the problem (possibly the jealousy between believing Jewish and Gentile leadership, cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13) was his clear presentation of the gospel (Romans 1-11) and its implications for daily life (Romans 12-16).

B. Romans is the theological development of the truths of Galatians (possibly Paul's first book). Ephesians is the development of Romans into a summary cyclical letter. Paul's gospel did not change but his way of presenting it did!

C. Paul's presentation of the gospel in Romans has impacted the church's life in every age.
   1. Augustine was converted in A.D. 386 reading Romans 13:13-14.
   2. Martin Luther's understanding of salvation was radically changed in A.D. 1513 as he compared Ps. 31:1 to Rom. 1:17 (cf. Hab. 2:4).
   3. John Wesley, walking by a Mennonite meeting in London in A.D. 1738, was converted after hearing Luther's sermon on the introduction to Romans being read because the assigned preacher did not show up!

D. To know Romans is to know Christianity! The letter shapes the life and teachings of Jesus into bedrock truths for the Church of all ages. Martin Luther said of it, "The chief book in the NT and the purest gospel!"

E. I always encourage new believers to start reading the Bible every day. I recommend to begin with three NT books.
   1. the Gospel of John, to understand Jesus
   2. the book of Romans, to understand Jesus' teachings applied to the churches
   3. 1 John, to know how to live out the gospel in everyday life

AUTHOR

Paul was definitely the author. His typical greeting is found in Rom. 1:1. It is generally agreed that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was bad eyesight, therefore, he did not physically write this letter himself, but he used a scribe, Tertius (cf. Rom. 16:22).

DATE

A. The probable date for the authorship of Romans is A.D. 56-58. This is one of the few New Testament books which can be dated fairly accurately. This is done by comparing Acts 20:2ff with Romans 15:17ff. Romans was probably written at Corinth toward the end of Paul's third missionary journey, just before he left for Jerusalem.

B. Possible chronology of Paul's writings following F. F. Bruce and Murry Harris with minor adaptations.

	Book	Date	Place of Writing	Relation to Acts
1	Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:28; 15:2
2	1 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 18:5
3	2 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	
4	1 Corinthians	55	Ephesus	Acts 19:20
5	2 Corinthians	56	Macedonia	Acts 20:2
6	Romans	57	Corinth	Acts 20:3
7-10	Prison Letters			
	Colossians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philemon	early 60's	Rome	
	Ephesians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philippians	late 62-63	Rome	Acts 28:30-31
11-13	Fourth Missionary Journey			
	1 Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
	Titus	63 but before	Ephesus (?)	
	2 Timothy	64 A.D.68)	Rome	

RECIPIENTS

The letter states its destination as the church in Rome (cf. Rom. 1:7), the capital of the Roman Empire. We do not know who founded the church at Rome.

A. It may have been some of the people who were visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and were converted and returned home to start a church (cf. Acts 2:10).

B. It could have been disciples who fled the persecution in Jerusalem after the death of Stephen (cf. Acts 8:4).

C. It could have been converts from Paul's missionary journeys who traveled to Rome. Paul had never visited this church, but he longed to (cf. Acts 19:21). He had many friends there (cf. Romans 16).

Apparently his plan was to visit Rome on his way to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:28) after his trip to Jerusalem with the "love gift." Paul felt his ministry in the eastern Mediterranean was finished. He sought new fields (cf. Rom. 15:20-23,28). The bearer of the letter from Paul in Corinth to Rome was Phoebe, a deaconess, who was traveling in that direction (cf. Rom. 16:1).

Why is this letter, written on the back streets of Corinth in the first century by a Jewish tentmaker, so valuable? Martin Luther called it "the chief book in the New Testament and the purest Gospel." The value of this book is found in the fact that it is an in-depth explanation of the gospel by the converted rabbi, Saul of Tarsus, called to be an apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9). Most of Paul's letters are strongly colored by a local situation, but not Romans. It is a systematic presentation of an Apostle's faith.

Did you realize, fellow Christian, that most of the technical terms used today to describe "faith" ("justification," "imputation," "adoption," and "sanctification") come from Romans? It is the theological development of the truths of Galatians. Pray for God to open to you this marvelous letter as we search together for His will for our lives today!

PURPOSE

A. An appeal for help from the church in Rome for his missionary trip to Spain. Paul saw his apostolic work in the eastern Mediterranean finished (cf. Rom. 15:20-23,28).

B. To address the problem in the Roman church between believing Jews and believing Gentiles. This was probably a result of the expulsion of all Jews from Rome (i.e., Claudius' [A.D. 41-54] edict to stop all Jewish rituals in Rome; see full note at Acts 18:2, 3rd item) and their later return. By then the Jewish Christian leaders had been replaced by Gentile Christian leaders.

C. To introduce himself to the Roman church. There was much opposition to Paul
1. from sincere converted Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Jerusalem Council of Acts 15)
2. from insincere Jews (Judaizers in Galatians and 2 Corinthians 3; 10-13)
3. from Gentiles (Colossians, Ephesians) who tried to merge the gospel with their pet theories or philosophies (i.e., Gnosticism).
Notice how Paul's life was threatened (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-28). I am always deeply moved by these verses. The Gospel is free, but it also costs everything!

D. Paul was accused of being a dangerous innovator, adding recklessly to Jesus' teaching. The book of Romans was his way of systematically defending himself by showing how his gospel was true
1. using the Old Testament
2. and the teachings of Jesus (the Gospels)
3. sometimes even quoting their philosophers

BRIEF OUTLINE

A. Introduction (Rom. 1:1-17)
1. Salutation (Rom. 1:1-7)
a. Author (Rom. 1:1-5)
b. Destination (Rom. 1:6-7a)
c. Greeting (Rom. 1:7b)
2. Occasion (Rom. 1:8-15)
3. Theme (Rom. 1:16-17)

B. Need for Divine Righteousness (Rom. 1:18-3:20)
1. Decline of the Gentile World (Rom. 1:18-32)
2. Hypocrisy of the Jews or Pagan Moralists (Rom. 2:1-16)
3. Judgment of the Jews (Rom. 2:17-3:8)
4. Universal Condemnation (Rom. 3:9-20)

C. What is Divine Righteousness (Rom. 3:21-8:39)
1. Righteousness by Faith Alone (Rom. 3:21-31)
2. The Basis of Righteousness: God's Promise (Rom. 4:1-25)
a. Abraham's right standing (Rom. 4:1-5)
b. David (Rom. 4:6-8)
c. Abraham's Relation to Circumcision (Rom. 4:9-12)
d. God's Promise to Abraham (Rom. 4:13-25)
3. The Attainment of Righteousness (Rom. 5:1-21)
a. The subjective aspect: unmerited love, unequaled joy (Rom. 5:1-5)
b. the objective basis: God's amazing love (Rom. 5:6-11)
c. Adam/Christ typology: Adam's offense, God's provision (Rom. 5:12-21)
4. Divine righteousness must issue in personal righteousness (Rom. 6:1-7:25)
a. Freed from sin (Rom. 6:1-14)
(1) A supposed objection (Rom. 6:1-2)

(2) The meaning of baptism (Rom. 6:3-14)
b. Satan's slave or God's slave: your choice (Rom. 6:15-23)
c. Man's marriage to the Law (Rom. 7:1-6)
d. The Law is good, but sin prevents the good (Rom. 7:7-14)
e. The eternal struggle of good and evil in the believer (Rom. 7:15-25)
5. The observable results of divine righteousness (Rom. 8:1-39)
a. Life in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17)
b. The redemption of creation (Rom. 8:18-25)
c. The Spirit's constant help (Rom. 8:26-30)
d. The judicial triumph of justification by faith (Rom. 8:31-39)

D. The Divine Purpose for All Humanity (Rom. 9:1-11:32)
1. The election of Israel (Rom. 9:1-33)
a. Real heirs of faith (Rom. 9:1-13)
b. Sovereignty of God (Rom. 9:14-26)
c. God's universal plan includes the heathen (Rom. 9:27-33)
2. The salvation of Israel (Rom. 10:1-21)
a. God's righteousness vs. mankind's righteousness (Rom. 10:1-13)
b. God's mercy necessitates messengers, a call for world missions (Rom. 10:14-18)
c. Israel's continued disbelief in Christ (Rom. 10:19-21)
3. The failure of Israel (Rom. 11:1-36)
a. The Jewish remnant (Rom. 11:1-10)
b. Jewish jealousy (Rom. 11:11-24)
c. Israel's temporary blindness (Rom. 11:25-32)
d. Paul's outburst of praise (Rom. 11:33-36)

E. The Result of the Gift of Divine Righteousness (Rom. 12:1-15:13)
1. Call to consecration (Rom. 12:1-2)
2. The use of gifts (Rom. 12:3-8)
3. Believers' relations with other believers (Rom. 12:9-21)
4. Relations with the State (Rom. 13:1-7)
5. Relations with neighbors (Rom. 13:8-10)
6. Relations with our Lord (Rom. 13:11-14)
7. Relations with fellow church members (Rom. 14:1-12)
8. Our affect on others (Rom. 14:13-23)
9. Relations in Christlikeness (15:1-13)

F. Conclusion (Rom. 15:14-33)
1. Paul's personal plans (Rom. 15:14-29)
2. Requests for prayer (Rom. 15:30-33)

G. Postscript (Rom. 16:1-27)
1. Greetings (Rom. 16:1-24)
2. Benediction (Rom. 16:25-27)

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